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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2002

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**U.S. ACHIEVES RECORD \$1 MILLION SETTLEMENT IN HOUSING  
DISCRIMINATION CASE AGAINST CHICAGO DEVELOPER AND ARCHITECT**

CHICAGO -- In what is believed to be the largest settlement nationwide in a case involving a single building, The John Buck Company and Harry Weese Associates, the Chicago-based developer and architect of the Park Evanston, a 24-story luxury high-rise apartment building in Evanston, have agreed to pay more than \$1 million to settle a Fair Housing Act lawsuit brought by the United States last December, announced Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois. The civil complaint filed in this case alleged numerous violations of the accessibility requirements of the Fair Housing Act, such as doors too narrow for persons in wheelchairs to use and thermostats too high to operate. As a result of the settlement, each of the 283 units and the common areas will be retrofitted to make them accessible to persons with disabilities, with Harry Weese Associates bearing more than \$900,000 of the costs. The defendants will also pay damages, a civil penalty to the United States, and attorneys' fees to Access Living of Metropolitan Chicago, the organization that began the case by filing a complaint with the Department of Housing and Urban Development and is also a plaintiff in the action.

More specifically, in addition to retrofitting the building, The John Buck Company will pay damages of \$50,000 into a fund for persons who were unable to rent at the Park Evanston or lived

in inaccessible units though they required accessibility, a civil penalty of \$13,600 to the United States, and \$30,000 in attorney's fees to Access Living. Another defendant in the lawsuit, Gensler Architecture, Design & Planning Worldwide, P.C., as the successor corporation to the Weese firm which has since dissolved, will pay an additional \$10,000 in attorney's fees to Access Living.

“As this settlement demonstrates, it can be extremely expensive to go back and make housing accessible after a building is completed, while the additional cost to design and build it right from the start is negligible,” said Mr. Fitzgerald. “We are heartened that this leading Chicago developer and renowned architectural firm have agreed without further litigation to bring the building into compliance with the accessibility requirements of the law.”

According to the consent decree, signed today by U.S. Magistrate Judge Martin C. Ashman, bedroom and bathroom doors, which in 80 percent of the units are too narrow for persons using wheelchairs, will be widened. Where necessary, bathrooms and kitchens will be changed to allow the necessary maneuvering space for use by persons with mobility impairments. The defendants will also lower thermostats to make them reachable by persons who use wheelchairs and make grab bars available to current and future tenants. The John Buck Company will make the repairs over a period of five years, with a minimum of 20 percent of the units retrofitted each year.

“This settlement demonstrates the Department of Justice's continuing commitment to enforcing the Fair Housing Act requirements for persons with disabilities,” said Ralph F. Boyd, Jr., Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. “We hope that this settlement encourages architects and builders across the nation to make sure the apartments and condominiums they design and build are accessible to persons with disabilities as required by law.”

The government is being represented by Assistant United States Attorney Joan Laser.

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